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Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 93: ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

1. Mr. GLÉLÉ-AHANHANZO (Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance) observed that the Organization had consistently made great efforts to translate into reality the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Biblical ideal of the oneness of the human race.

2. Reviewing the terms of his mandate from the Commission on Human Rights, he proposed to focus on the main points made in his interim report to the Commission's fiftieth session, which had not yet been issued as a General Assembly document. His inquiry, both conceptual and factual, had sought to encompass a vast, complex field. Racism was a recurrent historical phenomenon. In all societies, the argument of a supposed biological inequality of the races had from time immemorial been used to justify and fan racial hatred, exclusion and even persecution and extermination, as evidenced for instance by the enslavement or mistreatment of blacks, or the anti-Semitism that had been flourishing for centuries. Many studies, notably by UNESCO, had exposed the pseudo-scientific underpinnings of racism, but that determinist argument was still being voiced, most recently in a controversial United States best seller on disparities between the intelligence of whites and blacks, which the President himself had felt compelled to rebut. Currently, the most fashionable justification for racism and intolerance was the supposed hierarchy of cultures and their basic incommunicability, a fundamental thesis that had been exploded, once again, by the solid work done by UNESCO in recent years on race and culture, but that continued to find adherents even in a world where society was becoming increasingly globalized and ethnically intermingled.

3. The definition of racial discrimination in article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination clearly intended to encompass the related phenomenon of xenophobia - the rejection and exclusion on national or ethnic grounds of persons who did not share the same culture and level of development as a supposed elite.

4. It was a great misfortune that racism often engendered racism in response. Yet it had also prompted many genuine humanist impulses to reaffirm the dignity and equality of all persons and to work in solidarity against that shameful ill.

5. As sources for his report to the Commission, he had drawn on the replies to questionnaires he had sent to Member States, non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies and interregional organizations, as well as information culled from the press. A number of Governments had asserted that racism and xenophobia were unknown in their countries. In his own occasional field missions, he had focused on whatever efforts had been made to remedy racist situations. In October 1994, he had visited the United States, and in December he would visit the United Kingdom. In 1995, he planned missions to Germany and

Brazil and, knowing that racism knew no boundaries, he had made further contacts with Governments in all five continents regarding eventual missions.

6. In 1994, racism and discrimination had taken a more violent turn and had infected larger segments of the population in several regions, especially in the United States and Europe but also in Africa. In the United States, despite the official prohibition of racial segregation, African American, Jewish, Arab, Latino, Asian and Native American citizens and immigrants were experiencing difficulties in becoming integrated into society and daily endured indirect and subtle discrimination as a result of the modification of Federal laws by state governments and even of a liberal ideology which often led to selfish individualism and elitism. Discrimination was most apparent in the area of economic and social rights - in housing, education, health or employment; in the frequency of police brutality or miscarriages of justice; and in increasingly severe restrictions on immigration. Aware of the challenge, the United States Administration had made laudable efforts to counter those trends.

7. The climate in Europe was one in which xenophobia and racism thrived, and its main victims were African, Asian, Arab, Turkish and Eastern European immigrants and refugees. The European countries were passing increasingly discriminatory and restrictive legislation against those nationalities and the idea of a Europe for the Europeans was gaining currency. The position of migrant workers and women was particularly precarious. In short, intolerance was very widespread, and the countries grappling with it should recognize the problem and work with the United Nations to find solutions.

8. Contemporary forms of racism and racial discrimination seemed to have their roots in the global economic crisis and the ensuing competition for economic resources, which fostered a refusal to share with the poorer and the less advanced, and exacerbated nationalism, intolerance, xenophobia and racism. Governments and peoples must react. The first step was to recognize the problem, as had been done in Germany, France, the United States and Norway, for instance. It was heartening that in some of those countries the civilian population as well had mobilized against racism and xenophobia. Most of the Governments had adopted legislation and regulations to prevent or control the problem. At the regional level, the Council of Europe had adopted a plan of action in October 1993 against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance.

9. He noted that it was not part of his mandate to report on anti-Muslim intolerance, since the Commission on Human Rights had appointed a separate Special Rapporteur to deal with religious intolerance.

10. Within his own area of concern, he wished to make a number of recommendations. First, the necessary funds must be provided so that he and the Commission's six other Special Rapporteurs could carry out their mandates properly. Since the Centre for Human Rights was very hard-pressed for staff, consideration should be given to the appointment of an associate expert to assist each Special Rapporteur, and to the creation of a special trust fund, within the Trust Fund for the Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat

Racism and Racial Discrimination, that would be specifically allocated to the mandate on racism, racial discrimination and all the other forms of discrimination he had discussed.

11. Secondly, the issue should be given the widest possible objective scrutiny through the holding of an interdisciplinary seminar on the theoretical and practical aspects of contemporary forms of racial discrimination, as well as regional workshops, for all of which the necessary funding must be provided.

12. Thirdly, he reiterated his proposal to erect at the conclusion of the Third Decade, a memorial to the victims of racism and racial discrimination, again financed by voluntary funds.

13. He hailed the ratification by the United States of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and hoped that that country would ratify all the other human rights instruments as well. He urged all other States which had not done so to ratify those instruments and to adopt legislation to put them into effect.

AGENDA ITEM 100: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued) (A/49/57 and Corr.1, A/49/58, A/49/75-S/1994/180, A/49/182, 206, 220-221, 265, 271, 282-283, 286, A/49/287 and Corr.1, S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/292, 298, 304, 386, 422, 532 and 591)

(b) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (continued) (A/49/36, A/49/188, A/49/228-S/1994/827, A/49/264-E/1994/113, A/49/293, 311, 321, 337, 366, 410, 415 and Add.1, 416, 512, 528, 545, 582, 595 and 675; A/C.3/49/5, 9, 11 and 17)

(c) HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES (continued) (A/49/82, 85, 88, 168, A/49/183-S/1994/733, A/49/186, A/49/218-S/1994/801, A/49/270-E/1994/116, A/49/273-S/1994/864, A/49/394, A/49/455, A/49/508-S/1994/1157, A/49/513, 514 and Add.1 and 2, 538, 539, 543, 544, 594 and Add.1, A/49/635 and Add.1, A/49/641-S/1994/1252, A/49/650, 651 and 716; A/C.3/49/15-17 and 19)

(d) COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION (continued) (A/49/668; A/C.3/49/5, 8 and 10)

14. Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria), referring to agenda item 100 (d), said that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in providing a coherent framework of principles, objectives and means for promoting and protecting human rights, was a forward-looking and action-oriented document. The process of implementing it had begun immediately after the World Conference on Human Rights: many of its recommendations had already been incorporated into specific resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. Many other actors were involved in its implementation: all Governments, the United Nations human

rights bodies, national institutions, non-governmental organizations and the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose appointment had been thus far the most significant achievement.

15. Austria welcomed the determination, courage and circumspection with which the High Commissioner had assumed his difficult responsibilities, on the basis of a clear and very comprehensive mandate. The main principles outlined by the High Commissioner in his report (A/49/36) and the overwhelming international support for his approach augured well for the future. Cooperation at all levels, a comprehensive and integrated approach and the participation of all actors were the basic principles to be put into practice, in a spirit of dialogue, consensus and solidarity.

16. The High Commissioner had responded in that spirit to acute human rights violations and had sought to prevent them, as evidenced by his handling of the tragedies in Rwanda and Burundi. In less urgent situations as well, he had engaged in a dialogue with Governments with a view to ensuring respect for all human rights and had encouraged regional and national human rights institutions and non-governmental institutions to take the same approach.

17. Austria laid particular emphasis on the principle of a comprehensive, integrated approach to the protection and promotion of human rights, as laid out by the High Commissioner. The mutually reinforcing interrelationship between democracy, respect for human rights and sustainable development not only necessitated such an approach but also benefited from it. In that regard, action by the High Commissioner to ensure the provision of advisory services and technical assistance should help to meet the demand from all parts of the world and generate criteria and priorities applicable throughout the United Nations system. System-wide coordination would also be significantly advanced by the establishment of the post of High Commissioner, and his meetings with those involved in aspects of human rights would undoubtedly generate positive action and increase the efficiency of the United Nations human rights machinery. Austria expected the Working Group of the Third Committee to provide a forum for a continuing dialogue among Governments and between Governments and the High Commissioner, and also to generate support for a common approach in the field. In so far as coordination within the Secretariat was concerned, the High Commissioner himself would no doubt help to solve the well-known administrative and financial problems of the Centre for Human Rights, particularly given his emphasis on unity of action, with the Centre implementing policy directions set by the Commissioner.

18. General Assembly resolution 48/121 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/95 provided for an annual review mechanism to assess the progress made in implementing all the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Secretary-General had submitted his first report on the follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights (A/49/668), which gave a valuable summary of the measures taken by the different parts of the United Nations human rights system. Sections IV, VII, VIII, XI-XIII, XVI, XIX and XX of the report referred to activities which Austria considered to be of particular importance. Those activities added to the already heavy workload and

responsibilities of the United Nations human rights system, yet the gap between resources and mandated activities had only just begun to be breached.

19. In his report, the Secretary-General urged prompt endorsement of a detailed plan of implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, accompanied by the necessary financial decisions. The draft resolution which his delegation would be submitting under item 100 (d) would include a request to the High Commissioner to prepare such a plan. Austria looked forward to continuing to play a constructive role in keeping alive the spirit of Vienna.

20. Ms. LAIZANE (Latvia) said that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action affirmed that human rights went hand in hand with democracy and development. While development was a primary goal of the international community and facilitated the enjoyment of all human rights, lack of development could not excuse violations of internationally recognized human rights. There were still daunting challenges to human rights in many areas around the world. Latvia vigorously condemned the genocide and crimes against humanity committed in Rwanda. The establishment by the Security Council of the International Tribunal for Rwanda was a welcome development and she hoped that the perpetrators of massive human rights violations in that country would be quickly brought to trial. Her delegation also commended the activities of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Rwanda and the efforts made by the international community to avert further humanitarian problems and promote reconciliation there.

21. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to be the victims of massive violations of human rights, especially genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and the systematic rape of women. Latvia attached great importance to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and hoped that States would cooperate with it in order to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations.

22. Despite the success achieved in promoting democracy and political reconciliation in South Africa, there were still many areas of the world where human rights were violated on a regular basis. The international community must continue its efforts to combat torture and other inhuman treatment, summary executions, disappearances, terrorism, intolerance and all forms of discrimination. The elimination of violence against and exploitation of women and girls must also continue to be a major concern of the international community.

23. Many human rights violations involved minorities. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the obligation of States to ensure that persons belonging to minorities could exercise fully and effectively all human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Latvia attached priority to that question and called for further work on the question of the implementation of the Declaration.

24. Her delegation stressed the importance of maintaining the system of special procedures, rapporteurs, representatives and working groups and the need to

ensure the continued and effective functioning of those mechanisms through adequate funding. A larger proportion of the regular budget should be allocated to human rights bodies, in particular, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. Additional resources alone, however, would not fulfil the commitment to human rights under the Charter. The promotion of a culture of human rights must be given a greater place in the international community's activities. Individual States must refrain from politicizing the human rights machinery at their disposal, in order to maintain the effectiveness of the international system.

25. Mr. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) expressed satisfaction with the work done by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and underscored the need to provide him with sufficient resources so that he could fulfil his mandate more efficiently. Cuba attached particular importance to the activities of the Working Group of the Third Committee on the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Those activities were essential for rationalizing the work of the Organization's human rights mechanisms and ensuring greater overall efficiency. His country also supported the efforts to strengthen the principles of objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality, as the basis for existing procedures for the promotion and protection of human rights.

26. Cuba reiterated its support for efforts to find a comprehensive, universal approach to human rights that recognized the diversity of political, economic and social systems and historical, cultural and religious traditions and ensured the right to development for three quarters of the world's population. Some delegations from the North sought to give lessons to the countries of the South while ignoring the fact that human rights problems affected all countries and that the goal should be to institute appropriate international cooperation in that area. The human rights of the countries of the South were being constantly flouted by the policies of the rich nations of the North and by the profoundly unjust and discriminatory system of international relations which they controlled. Racism, intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination were on the increase in European countries, and the victims continued to be migrant workers and their families, refugees and minorities. Countries such as Sweden that had historically received asylum-seekers had started to close their doors and xenophobia against immigrants was on the rise.

27. The United States of America could not conceal the gross injustices, inequality and discrimination that affected tens of millions of African Americans, Latin American, Asians, native Americans and other disadvantaged social groups. In California, racism was being institutionalized as a policy with the recent adoption of Proposition 187 denying basic health services and education to the children of immigrants. Some of the gravest violations of human rights in the history of the United States were still being committed against native Americans.

28. The situation most revealing of the real human rights situation in the United States, however, was its legal and prison system. Over 1 million people were imprisoned in that country, which had the world's highest incarceration

rate and largest juvenile prison system. The incarceration rate of African Americans was seven times that of the white population and they constituted 48 per cent of the total prison population. Although the United States judicial system was one of the most repressive in the world, particularly against minorities and other disadvantaged groups, it was falsely portrayed as the universal model for guaranteeing respect for human rights.

29. International cooperation to eliminate such violations and bring about full respect for human rights in all countries should be an objective of the United Nations. Cuba urged Member States to ensure the full implementation of all human rights on the basis of their universality, indivisibility and interdependence.

30. Mr. SZELEI (Hungary) said that human rights reporting and an international human rights field presence should strengthen United Nations peace-keeping and conflict resolution efforts as well. Experience showed that no sustainable political settlement could be achieved if human rights considerations were ignored. In order to reinforce the United Nations human rights and peace-keeping role, problems of accountability, chain of command and financing must be addressed in a more systematic way in the future. Hungary saw an important role for the High Commissioner for Human Rights in that regard and welcomed the close cooperation between him and the system of special rapporteurs. Cooperation with the High Commissioner did not exempt any Government from extending its full cooperation to the mechanisms established by the relevant United Nations bodies. The institutionalization of regular exchanges of opinion among special rapporteurs and the continuation of their dialogue with the High Commissioner were important priorities for the future.

31. To enable the United Nations human rights machinery to function properly, the problem of funding must be addressed seriously. While Member States had the right to expect sound management from the Secretariat, they also had a responsibility to allocate the necessary resources for activities mandated by policy-making bodies. Hungary looked forward to a constructive dialogue on allocating a larger share of the regular budget to the human rights programme and continued to support the High Commissioner in his untiring efforts to implement the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

32. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the abhorrent practices of ethnic cleansing, killing, rape and other physical abuse continued unabated. Military attacks against civilians persisted in a number of locations and the main perpetrators had been reported to be the Bosnian Serb forces. His delegation condemned those violations of human rights and reiterated that the violators should be brought to justice by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. At the same time, his delegation was extremely concerned at the lawlessness prevailing in the Serbian-controlled territories of Croatia and resolutely condemned the further deterioration of the human rights situation of the non-Serb population, including the Hungarian community and other minorities.

33. Hungary remained seriously concerned about gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and

Montenegro), particularly in Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina, and urged the authorities of that country to reconsider their refusal to allow the continuation of CSCE missions to monitor the human rights situation there in accordance with Security Council resolution 855 (1993).

34. Hungary strongly condemned the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Iraq, where the Government was implicated in summary executions, political killings, systematic torture and the repression of ethnic and religious minorities. The Government of Iraq should comply with its international obligations and account for and release without delay all those people who had been forcibly abducted from Kuwait. The situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran also continued to cause serious concern.

35. His delegation remained concerned at the reported continuing violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba and urged its Government to put an end to violations of civil and political rights. Freedom of expression and assembly should be fully respected by the Cuban authorities, in accordance with international standards.

36. The further deterioration of the human rights situation in the Sudan was cause for grave alarm. Hungary remained extremely concerned about continuing human rights violations, including extrajudicial and summary executions, widespread detention, torture, forced labour and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. His delegation condemned in the strongest terms the repeated air attacks on civilians by the Sudanese armed forces. It called upon the authorities to abide by their international human rights obligations and cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and upon all parties in the Sudan to observe the provisions of international humanitarian law. Hungary concurred fully with the European Union in commending the Special Rapporteur for his thorough and impartial investigation into the situation of human rights in that country.

37. His Government remained seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Myanmar and condemned the refusal by the armed forces to release all political detainees, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Sun Kyi. Lastly, he stressed that, since special rapporteurs, representatives, independent experts and working groups carried out their mandates on behalf of the United Nations, all Member States had an obligation to support their work.

38. Mr. LEE (Republic of Korea) said that his country welcomed the efforts made by the international community to implement the ideals of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Since its establishment in 1993, the civilian Government of the Republic of Korea had made the promotion of universal human rights a priority. Within a short period of time, a number of measures had been taken to promote not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural rights. Renewed importance had been attached to protecting the rights of women and children, and legal and social support structures had been established for that purpose.

39. His country was making a significant contribution to improving the human rights situation in the Asia-Pacific region, where there was no official intergovernmental structure dealing with human rights issues. A consensus had been reached on a proposal by his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs for an ongoing discussion on the question of a regional human rights instrument, which he hoped would ultimately result in the establishment of a regional human rights mechanism. Education and public information activities were also important for creating greater awareness of human rights issues. His Government planned to issue a reference book on human rights and was once again organizing various seminars on that question.

40. Approximately 5 million Koreans were believed to reside in foreign countries, and some of them were forced to live in undesirable conditions. His Government was well aware of the institutional barriers and social discrimination which minorities faced had to confront in trying to obtain an education and employment. Countries with minorities should be sensitive to their needs and give them adequate protection and opportunities.

41. The Republic of Korea had asked the Japanese Government to conduct a thorough investigation of the question of "comfort women" during the Second World War. There had been a positive development in 1993, when the Japanese Government had released a ministerial statement acknowledging the involvement of the wartime Japanese Government in the matter. His country would continue to follow any further measures taken by the Japanese Government and recognized the efforts made by the United Nations and various non-governmental organizations to address that issue.

42. The world human rights situation showed that much remained to be done to achieve universal compliance with basic human rights standards. His delegation deplored the flagrant violations of human rights in certain parts of the world, including genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and other forms of senseless brutality. He expressed deep appreciation to the special rapporteurs for their tireless efforts to give the international community a more accurate picture of the human rights situation in some countries. It was gratifying to note the reported significant improvements in Cambodia, Haiti and South Africa. Nevertheless, he shared the concern that there were still countries that refused to cooperate with the special rapporteurs, and urged those States to reconsider their position.

43. His country fully supported the emphasis placed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights and on coordination of activities throughout the United Nations system. Although States bore primary responsibility for creating conditions conducive to the right to development, the international community should assist their efforts through mechanisms for international cooperation. His delegation attached great importance to the activities of the Working Group on the Right to Development established by the Commission on Human Rights. Lack of development, however, could never justify human rights abuses.

44. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had made commendable efforts to enhance the Organization's role in the promotion and protection of human rights and to monitor violations world wide. His delegation hoped that the High Commissioner would be provided with more adequate resources so that he could better coordinate activities at the global level and respond more effectively to emergency situations. The Republic of Korea fully supported the High Commissioner's work and would continue to do its utmost to assist his activities. Member States should ensure the effectiveness of those activities by giving the High Commissioner their full support and cooperation.

45. Mr. CHKHEIDZE (Georgia) welcomed the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which would permit the coordination of United Nations human rights mechanisms, marking a turning-point for the victims of conflicts around the world who had lost their faith in the effectiveness of such mechanisms.

46. Gross violations of human rights were occurring in his country, where minorities had always enjoyed full rights under the law. Thousands of civilians had died in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, and in the process of "ethnic cleansing" in that area, four fifths of the population, both Georgians, who had been the majority, and other nationalities, had been made homeless or refugees. The same was true even of many of the minority Abkhaz, who had enjoyed full equality with Georgians. About half of them, not wishing to be associated with the brutal methods of the gangs of mercenaries and murderers who claimed to be fighting for Abkhaz freedom, had preferred to leave their homeland. International efforts to resolve the crisis had come to nothing and Security Council resolutions had been cynically disregarded.

47. He drew a parallel between the situation in Georgia and that in Rwanda, and stressed the importance of preventive measures to guard against such developments. He called on the world community and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist refugees in returning and his Government in reaching a negotiated settlement, while at the same time bringing to justice the violators of the basic human right to life.

48. Mr. SHATTUCK (United States of America) said that, in the face of new challenges, a flexible and effective international system of human rights accountability was urgently needed. Accountability had two dimensions - vertical, in which Governments were accountable to their people, and horizontal, across the broader international community. The legitimacy of the United Nations as the voice of the international community, together with the global range of its activities, qualified it as an instrument of human rights accountability, and his delegation had worked on many fronts to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery.

49. Institutions of justice were central to an accountability system, and in countries which were undergoing difficult transitions to democracy - for example, in Central America - or where judicial systems had broken down - for example, the former Yugoslavia - his country had worked to create the means to

investigate human rights abuses. Similarly, it had helped to improve the existing judicial systems in other countries in transition.

50. One of the largest tasks facing the United Nations was to respond to humanitarian and political issues arising from the current human rights crises in such countries as Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haiti and Rwanda. Humanitarian efforts to assist refugees, relieve hunger and alleviate other human suffering must be complemented by political efforts aimed at establishing accountability and deterring conflict in the long term. The combined imperatives of humanitarian politics must be integrated into the United Nations system without delay.

51. The issues raised by the situation in Rwanda epitomized the challenge of humanitarian politics. If the forces of chaos were to be contained, many needs had to be met - provision of food and shelter, reconstitution of the nation, institution of legal and political accountability, reconciliation of warring factions, as well as the return of refugees and the re-establishment of long-term stability in the region. Human rights were central to all those issues, and that was reflected in the way they were being tackled in Rwanda. A war crimes tribunal was essential to avoid future genocide and to protect the most basic human rights; human rights monitors were being deployed through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; United Nations operations were to be strengthened and coordinated with humanitarian relief, human rights monitoring and enforcement activities; and the United Nations should assist in building justice and democracy in Rwanda.

52. Creative collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations would help prevent crises from developing and break destructive cycles of violence.

53. Lastly, democracy and human rights were complementary to economic development and a further major task was to foster open societies which offered opportunities to people's creativity and also safeguarded their welfare and inalienable dignity. The forces of social, economic and political disintegration and chaos were the new enemies of human rights and democracy. They could shape the world of the future unless conflict prevention, accountability and strategies for sustainable economic and political development supplemented traditional human rights advocacy.

54. Mr. HERRERA (Guatemala) said that his Government took its responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights very seriously, despite its current financial difficulties, and that its agenda for the coming year was a practical one. It was modernizing and strengthening democratic institutions through the reform of State bodies, the Constitution, the Attorney-General's Office and National Police.

55. In their pursuit of peace and national reconciliation, the Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) had signed a Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, pursuant to which a United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) had been established.

An Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict had also been signed, as well as the Agreement on the Establishment of a Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations. Lastly, a Secretariat for Peace, Reconciliation and Development had been established and discussions on the rights of indigenous peoples had recently resumed.

56. His Government's desire to protect and promote human rights was further illustrated by measures such as using the ordinary criminal courts to try military personnel accused of non-military crimes, police education programmes, draft legislation on national security and State intelligence mechanisms and on social and military service, increased public spending on health and education and the establishment of national commissions for indigenous education and culture and for strengthening human rights education within the national education system.

57. Given the complexity of that task and the fact that resources were limited, he vigorously condemned terrorist elements within Guatemala which were using violence to undermine the Government and civil society, with adverse consequences for the country's economic and social development and for human rights.

58. Mr. DUONG CHI DUNG (Viet Nam) said that human rights should be an area for cooperation, not confrontation. He hoped that cooperation and dialogue, in the spirit of Vienna, would come to characterize the approach to human rights issues, and he was encouraged by the fact that the High Commissioner's mandate committed him to preserving and strengthening such human solidarity.

59. It was regrettable, therefore, that a spirit of confrontation still existed within the Committee, illustrated by the attempts of certain countries to discredit third world countries by name. It was important to take account of countries' different stages of socio-economic development, which affected national priorities. A starving country was far more concerned with feeding its people than with the forms and methods of democracy. Understanding and respect for different interpretations of human rights and for different measures adopted according to national conditions, together with a policy of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, would help to establish a frank and constructive dialogue among sovereign States. That was the only way to advance human rights throughout the world and to avoid a North-South human rights divide in addition to the North-South economic divide.

60. His country had engaged in human rights dialogues to great effect with a number of countries in recent years. Having visited the other country and received first-hand information, each side had been able to learn from the other's experiences in attempting to protect and promote human rights.

61. As an illustration of the confrontational and politicized approach taken to human rights issues, he drew attention to a statement about his country made the previous day by the representative of Canada. That statement had been false and misleading and had been based on unfounded allegations and distorted information. Such lack of objectivity impeded the trend towards constructive

cooperation and went against recent positive developments in the bilateral relations between Canada and Viet Nam. Viet Nam was committed to protecting and promoting human rights and, having acceded to eight international human rights conventions, had strictly fulfilled the obligations set out therein. Because of his Government's consistent policy in that regard, his country had enjoyed social stability, economic growth and an improvement in the standard of living.

62. Mr. SHAMBOS (Cyprus) pledged his country's full cooperation to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its support for concerted action to ensure the genuine implementation of the international human rights instruments. He recalled that the Human Rights Committee had welcomed the useful information contained in his Government's second periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the general legislative reform undertaken in Cyprus in that connection. The latest report of the Committee against Torture also commended human rights legislation in Cyprus and concluded that the country's legal and administrative system posed no structural or legal impediments to full implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. His Government had pledged its willingness to address apparent shortcomings in other areas, in line with the relevant recommendations.

63. The report of the Human Rights Committee, however, noted that the invasion and continuing occupation of Cyprus affected the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in that the Government was unable to ensure the Covenant's application in areas outside its control. For the same reasons, it was also unable to provide information on persons missing since the 1974 invasion. The unacceptable partition of his country was a constant denial of the individual and collective rights of members of the Greek Cypriot community who had been expelled from their homes and lands. Moreover, instead of complying with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the illegal regime and the occupying Power were forcibly preventing the safe return of displaced Greek Cypriots while steadily increasing the number of Turkish settlers, in a clearly premeditated attempt to alter the demographic composition of the occupied territory. The few hundred Greek Cypriots remaining in that territory were subject to harassment and discrimination and the European Commission of Human Rights had reported a series of human rights violations against them by the occupying Power.

64. Continuing human rights violations as a result of invasion and occupation accentuated the perennial challenge to full implementation of United Nations resolutions. Tolerance or inaction in response to such situations undermined aspirations to ensure the universal protection of human rights and respect for human rights instruments. Timely, effective remedial action must be taken if the prestige and credibility of the United Nations were to be preserved. Selectivity and double standards sowed discord and reaped violence, whereas concerted efforts and objectivity could ensure that justice prevailed.

65. Ms. FENG Cui (China), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the recent attacks on her country by the representatives of Sweden, the United States and Canada were groundless. Her Government had always attached great

importance to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Chinese people. Its achievements in that connection had attracted world-wide attention and could not be belittled by distortion and vilification. Moreover, by politicizing human rights and applying double standards, the representatives concerned had simply revealed their own hypocrisy. In the discussion of human rights issues, the behaviour of certain Western States gravely impeded and disrupted international cooperation in that field, while their antagonistic statements, made in bad faith, usually focused on levelling accusations at the developing countries. Such practices contravened the spirit of international cooperation enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; they should be outlawed by the international community and rejected by the Third Committee.

66. Her Government advocated international cooperation and dialogue in the field of human rights, based on non-interference in the internal affairs of States, mutual respect and equality as the only means of creating a climate conducive to such cooperation. Having fought long and hard to win independence, freedom and democracy, the Chinese people could no longer be dictated to by Western countries.

67. Mr. GUVEN (Turkey), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to earlier statements by the representative of Germany, on behalf of the European Union, and by Sweden. The former, while acknowledging the difficult situation in south-eastern Turkey, had unfortunately failed to mention the struggle in that region against the terrorist Marxist Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Thousands of innocent people had been killed in the terrorist atrocities carried out indiscriminately by PKK, whose ultimate objective was to carve out a separate State. Even more unfortunately, the German representative had called for a political solution without making any specific suggestions. If, by such a solution, he meant a civilized discussion of rights, freedoms and aspirations, he could rest assured that all the necessary democratic institutions already existed in Turkey. However, since PKK had chosen to use terrorism rather than the democratic means at its disposal, it was clearly uninterested in such a discussion. If, on the other hand, by a political solution the German representative meant carving out a State within sovereign Turkish borders, he could be equally assured that Turkey had no intention of relinquishing to a terrorist organization internationally recognized borders that had been secured by the Turkish people in its fight for independence.

68. He noted that the German representative had taken a profound interest in the human rights of terrorists, emphasizing that the fight against terrorism should be conducted with due regard to the rule of law and with full respect for international human rights standards. Turkey certainly intended to conduct itself in that manner. However, he would have liked the German representative to show the same interest in the violation of the right to life of the innocent victims of PKK terrorism. In conclusion, if he had taken to task those countries which considered themselves free to recklessly criticize others and offer so-called solutions to their problems, it was not because human rights violations were appearing in those countries in the form of racism, xenophobia and other political and social ills and they had failed to take action to curb

them, or because they had used ploys to conceal the racist undertones of their attacks on others, but because he would be remiss in his duty if he did not request that such facts also be taken into account.

69. Mr. AL-DOURI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statement made by the Canadian representative the previous day, said that no Government showed more concern for its people than the Iraqi Government. All the States that made a show of defending human rights in Iraq were motivated purely by political and economic interests. His Government's concern for its people was reflected in its efforts to save them from the threat of death, hunger and disease to which it had been subjected for over four years by hostile States both within and outside the region. He would have hoped that the Canadian representative's concern for the Iraqi people would have manifested itself in the adoption of a more humanitarian approach, such as releasing frozen Iraqi assets to permit the purchase of food and medicine. He did not wish to refer persistently to the fabricated, incorrect and politically biased information in the Special Rapporteur's report. However, the Iraqi people rejected the hypocrisy it heard daily from hostile parties that claimed to be defending its legitimate interests.

70. Turning to the statement made earlier by the Hungarian representative, he said he failed to see any reason for Hungary's adoption of such an extremist, hostile attitude towards Iraq. Any State, including Hungary, which adopted such an attitude did so with a view to reaping political and material rewards, particularly from States with which they wished to have closer relations. He would not therefore respond to the reactionary, self-interested position taken by Hungary, which could not be further removed from the moral principles that should govern relations among States.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.